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TECH SOLUTIONS

GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING EDTECH VENDORS

HANDBOOK FOR K-12 IT DIRECTORS & CTOS

Your Practical Guide to Evaluating, Selecting, and Managing
Educational Technology Partners to Maximize ROI



INTRODUCTION

Managing educational technology vendors isn't just about picking the lowest bid—it's about choosing strategic partners who align with your district's goals, budgets, and student outcomes. This handbook offers practical strategies from the field to help IT Directors and CTOs confidently evaluate, select, and manage their edtech vendors.



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DEFINE YOUR OBJECTIVES & FLEET STRATEGY

Before inviting vendors to the table, define your district's device management priorities. What works for a 1:1 take-home program may not apply to a cart-based classroom model—and what works for a 9-month refresh plan won't suit a district planning to stretch devices over four years. Your first step isn't a vendor search; it's internal clarity.

Start by outlining your district's device lifecycle expectations. Are you looking to keep devices in use for three years or more? Will your strategy differ by grade level or school type? Next, consider usage. Devices that remain in classrooms may require less ruggedization and support than those that go home daily. That changes not only your procurement strategy but also the type of repair and logistics support you'll need.

Beyond the physical devices, think about the kind of data that helps your team work smarter. What repair or usage trends would help you make better purchasing decisions? What kind of reporting cadence would support your board presentations or budget cycles? Your ideal vendor should be able to feed data into those rhythms.

It's also worth starting vendor conversations earlier than you might think. Experienced repair providers have a broad view of what's working—and what's not—across districts of all sizes. They may be able to flag potential pitfalls in your device mix, share insights about model durability, or suggest deployment strategies that have worked well elsewhere. Even if you're not ready to select a vendor, their input can help shape a more resilient and cost-effective device strategy.

TIP: Talk to experienced vendors early. Their frontline perspective can help you build a smarter device and fleet plan from the start.



VENDOR EVALUATION & SELECTION

Choosing the right vendor begins with understanding how they've performed for others—but not just any others. Ask for references from districts that mirror your own in size, device type, and operational setup. A rural district with 5,000 students will have vastly different needs than an urban district managing 40,000 take-home devices.

Don't skip the facility visit. What you see (or don't) can tell you more than any brochure. Observe how devices move through the intake and repair pipeline. Is the process structured? Are technicians certified and focused? Are there quality checks in place?

Responsiveness is another early litmus test. Send a few basic questions over email. How fast do they reply—and how clearly? A good partner treats even pre-sales support like a priority.

Finally, ask for sample analytics. A solid vendor can show failure rates, turnaround times, and even fleet-wide trends that help you forecast repair volumes and budget for replacements. If they can't—or won't—that's a flag.

TIP: Use the included checklist at the end of this guide for more vendor questions.

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INITIAL CONTRACTS & SMART TERMS

Once you've selected a vendor, your contract should be as strategic as your selection process. Start with a short-term agreement—ideally one year—with an option to renew or expand. This gives you time to evaluate service quality without locking your district into a long-term commitment.

Look for flexibility and protection. A cancellation clause is essential in case the vendor doesn't meet expectations. Define what triggers termination clearly and ensure both sides understand the implications.

Clarify what's included in the scope of service. Will they cover all reported and unreported damage? Are shipping and logistics part of the agreement, or is that billed separately? What happens if the vendor misses an SLA? These details are easy to overlook in early conversations but often become pain points later.

Finally, account for your full fleet—not just new devices under warranty. Your contract should support legacy devices, mixed OEMs, and different service plans like ADP or flat-rate repair.



ADP THAT'S ACTUALLY PROTECTIVE

Accidental Damage Protection (ADP) can be a powerful tool—or a costly disappointment—depending on how it's structured. The best ADP plans are insurance-backed by a reputable, A rated insurer. This ensures that funds are available when claims rise and that coverage can be trusted to deliver.

Another important distinction is between eroding and non-eroding coverage. In an eroding plan, each repair eats away at the total coverage amount. Once you hit the limit, you're on your own. A non-eroding plan covers any number of incidents, as long as the cost of a single repair doesn't exceed the device value.

FEATURE	ERODING	NON-ERODING
Repair Limit Per Claim	Up to device value	Up to device value
Total Coverage Limit	Limited by device value (reduces with each claim)	Unlimited (as long as each repair is within device value)
Examples of Coverage	A \$300 device with a \$200 repair leaves \$100 for future repair.	A \$300 device can be repaired unlimited times as long as each repair < \$300.

Look for claim simplicity. You shouldn't need to submit serial numbers, incident reports, or lengthy justifications for every repair. A good ADP provider makes it easy to get devices fixed and back to students quickly.



PERFORMANCE METRICS THAT MATTER

Vendor performance shouldn't be a mystery. The right partner will proactively provide data on how their services are impacting your fleet. That means regular reporting on turnaround times, BER rates (Beyond Economic Repair), and the top reasons for device failure.

Beyond raw numbers, you want a partner who can help you interpret the data. For example, if screen replacements are spiking at one school, it could point to improper storage—or poor-quality cases. If turnaround times are slipping, the issue could be parts shortages, process bottlenecks, or shipping delays. Your vendor should surface these trends and work with you to solve them.

Ask for exportable data that can feed into your own dashboards or presentations. Whether you're reporting to the board or advocating for more budget, clear, visual data makes the case.

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LOGISTICS THAT FIT YOUR FOOTPRINT

How devices move between your schools and the repair facility can impact everything from cost to classroom time. Many districts assume a nearby repair vendor is the fastest option—but that’s not always the case.

Local “milk runs”—where a driver picks up and drops off devices on a set schedule—can work well for both large and small districts. These routes reduce staff workload and allow for more personalized service. However, they rely on predictable volume and geographic proximity, which may not work for every location.

Shipping through UPS offers broader reach and flexibility. Daily or semiweekly pickups can keep repairs moving efficiently, especially for rural or widely spread districts. UPS-based logistics should be part of your service agreement to avoid surprise costs and coordination gaps.

Many districts find that a hybrid model delivers the best results. High-volume locations might benefit from scheduled pickups, while smaller or remote schools rely on shipping. The key is to match your logistics strategy to your district’s size, staffing, and geographic distribution—not a one-size-fits-all model.



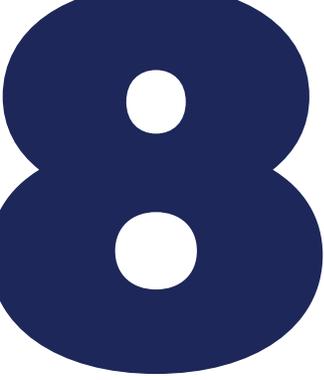
BUILDING A RESILIENT FLEET

Smart purchasing decisions are rooted in long-term thinking. When planning your next device refresh, don't just compare price points—ask your vendor for insight on model durability, part availability, and common failure points.

For example, 14- to 15-inch screens may offer a better student experience but can be more expensive to maintain due to higher screen replacement costs. Some models have keyboards or hinges that are known to break frequently. These are things your vendor should be tracking and sharing.

Also consider how long a device can be kept in circulation with regular maintenance. With proper repair support, many Chromebooks can remain serviceable well beyond the typical 3-4 year refresh window.

And don't overlook the importance of managing your spare pool. Devices sent into circulation as replacements can quietly become permanent if you don't have strong tracking in place. Your vendor should help you monitor spare device flow and return rates.



DEVICE CARE AS A STRATEGY

Preventing damage is more cost-effective than repairing it. The best districts treat device care not as a set of rules but as a culture supported by clear communication, strong habits, and smart policies.

Start by encouraging early repair reporting. Small cracks or keyboard issues can spiral into bigger, more expensive problems if left unchecked. Make it easy for students and staff to report damage—and respond quickly when they do.

Hard-shell cases are another simple but effective solution. Soft cases often invite overstuffing, which leads to pressure damage. Choosing the right case type based on student age and usage habits makes a difference.

Parent communication also matters. When families understand how devices should be stored, charged, and handled, outcomes improve. A short flyer or back-to-school video can go a long way.

Finally, use your repair data to monitor what's working. Dashboards that show failure trends by school or grade level can uncover patterns—and opportunities to reduce damage across the board.



ONGOING VENDOR MANAGEMENT

Your relationship with a vendor doesn't end when the contract is signed—it evolves with your needs. The best partnerships are marked by consistent communication, transparent reporting, and a shared focus on improvement.

Set up regular check-ins to review service delivery and discuss upcoming needs. These meetings are a chance to address SLA performance, discuss patterns in repair trends, and talk through any issues that arise.

Look at the data together. Are turnaround times meeting expectations? Are BER rates creeping up? Are the same devices coming in multiple times? These insights can lead to small tweaks that drive better results.

Encourage innovation. Vendors who consistently bring ideas to the table—whether it's streamlined shipping kits, smarter triage, or upgraded dashboards—show that they're invested in your success.

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ROI & CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Return on investment isn't just about dollars spent. It's about learning time gained, staff workload reduced, and strategic clarity achieved. Your vendor should help you track all of these.

ASK YOURSELF: Are more students staying connected to learning because repairs are fast? Are staff spending less time tracking shipments and more time supporting instruction? Are you making more informed purchasing decisions based on device performance data?

A good vendor doesn't just deliver a service—they make your entire operation run more smoothly. And they should be helping you get better year after year, not just staying afloat.

VENDOR EVALUATION CHECKLIST

# of Years Experience in Device Repair	<input type="checkbox"/>
Non-eroding Accidental Damage Protection (ADP)	<input type="checkbox"/>
ADP Underwritten by Global AM Best A Rated Insurer	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fast Turn Times	<input type="checkbox"/>
Targeted 10 Business Day + Shipping Turn Time	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fully Managed Deployments	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spare Pool Management	<input type="checkbox"/>
A+ Certified Technicians	<input type="checkbox"/>
ISO 9001:2015 Certified by NQA Facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>
MSD JEDEC STD-033C and ESD (Electrostatic Discharge) Certification	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mainboard Repairs (BGA Rework, X-Ray Inspected Welds)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bulk Parts Ordering at Start of Contract (Reduces Downtime Due to Parts Delays)	<input type="checkbox"/>
All Reported and Unreported Issues Repaired	<input type="checkbox"/>
60-Day Warranty on Repairs	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cloud-based Repair Management Platform with API Integrations	<input type="checkbox"/>
All Shipping Included	<input type="checkbox"/>
R2V3, ISO 45001 and ISO 14001 Certified Disposal	<input type="checkbox"/>
Contract Cancellable at Any Time	<input type="checkbox"/>
White Glove Deployments	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Shipping & Receiving <input type="checkbox"/> Unboxing & Kitting <input type="checkbox"/> Friendly Packaging & Recycling <input type="checkbox"/> Device Imaging <input type="checkbox"/> Performance Testing <input type="checkbox"/> Asset Data Capture & Tagging <input type="checkbox"/> Customized Distribution	

This guide was developed using field insights, expert-backed research, and verified sources including CoSN, Digital Promise, EdTech Magazine, and Tech & Learning. See citations for full source list.

VENDOR CONTRACT PROMPTS

Turnaround Times

“What are your turnaround times for repairs or support, and how are they measured?”

Coverage Details

“Does coverage erode over time, or is it non-eroding? Are there deductibles, exclusions, or caps we should know about?”

Transparency & Reporting

“What reporting will we receive? How often? Can we access device-level data in real time?”

Parts & Availability

“How do you source parts, and how do you ensure availability throughout the contract term?”

Service Alignment

“Can you support mixed fleets (different OEMs, ages, and models) under a single agreement?”

Accountability

“What happens if service levels aren’t met? Are there penalties, credits, or remedies in place?”

Exit Terms

“What are the terms if we decide to end the contract early or transition services?”

ENDNOTES & REFERENCES

CoSN (Consortium for School Networking): Resources on edtech vendor evaluation and cybersecurity best practices. <https://www.cosn.org>

Digital Promise: Research on K–12 edtech implementation, device lifecycle planning, and instructional technology. <https://www.digitalpromise.org>

EdTech Magazine: Articles and case studies on K–12 procurement, IT management, and vendor partnerships. <https://edtechmagazine.com/k12>

Tech & Learning: Practical insights for K–12 technology leaders on product effectiveness, fleet strategy, and ROI. <https://www.techlearning.com>

Clever: Blog series on vendor vetting and data security practices in education. <https://www.clever.com>

ManagedMethods: Guides and checklists for assessing vendor privacy and data practices. <https://managedmethods.com>





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